NOVA SCOTIA Government of Nova Scotia

The Craft of Nova Scotian Masks

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"Mask: the word conjures up powerful images. The implication is of disguise, facade, false face, and front. Masks are universal and universally mysterious," says Terri Vernon.

From Sept. 24 to Nov. 14, Ms. Vernon will curate an exhibition exploring the power and the appeal of the mask through examples from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick at the Mary E. Black Gallery in the Nova Scotia Centre for Craft and Design.

A rich culture of mask making exists in Nova Scotia. Masks are used for cultural celebrations, for theatrical presentations and for individual self-expression. Acadian mask makers create masks for the "mi-careme" or mid-Lent mumming tradition which is age-old but still alive in many Acadian communities. Mummers go from house to house in disguise, and the masks reflect individual ideas, traditional figures, or even faces from television and film.

Other masks used in stage productions of The Comedy of Errors and The Just So Stories, by Mermaid Theatre and Shakespeare by the Sea are included. Individuals such as George Fry, Nadine Cox, Sally Hutchinson, and Karen Schlick pay homage to the natural world, explore the collective unconscious and reveal aspects of myth and literature.

"The mask maker crafts the object, leaving participation to the audience, or quiet contemplation to the viewer," says Ms. Vernon. "The rich and multi-facetted craft of contemporary mask making is alive and well in Nova Scotia."

The exhibit, opened on Sept. 24 and continues until Nov. 14. The Centre is located at 1683 Barrington Street, Halifax, and is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday to Friday, and on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The Nova Scotia Centre for Craft and Design is a program/resource centre of the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture and is operated by the department's Cultural Affairs Division. The centre is a catalyst in the development of designers and craft persons as well as functioning as a visitor destination site.

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